

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7445

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 SAN JOSE 2267

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CAPTION ADDED)

STATE FOR, ARA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, CS, PINR

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC SKETCHES OF COSTA RICAN LEADERS

REF: STATE 104923

1. PER REFTEL, THIS MESSAGE TRANSMITS BIOGRAPHIC SKETCHES OF PRESIDENT DANIEL ODUBER, MRS. ODUBER, FOREIGN MINISTER GONZALO FACIO, MRS. FACIO, AND PRESIDENT OF SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL (TRIBUNAL SUPREMO DE ELLECCIONES) FRANCISCO SAENZ MEZA.

2. PRESIDENT DANIEL ODUBER QUIROS, 56, WAS INAUGURATED PRESIDENT OF COSTA RICA IN MAY 1974. A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION PARTY, ODUBER HAS HELD MANY PUBLIC POSITIONS IN HIS LONG CAREER INCLUDING FOREIGN MINISTER OF COSTA RICA (1962-1964) AND PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (1970-1973).

THE PRESIDENT IS SOPHISTICATED, WELL EDUCATED, WELL TRAVELLED, AND A SKILLED POLITICAN. A LAWYER BY PROFESSION, HE ALSO HAS A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN PHILOSOPHY FROM MCGILL UNIVERSITY IN MONTREAL, AND HAS ATTENDED THE SORBONNE IN PARIS. HIS QUEST FOR A

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PHD ENDED WHEN THEN PRESIDENT FIGUERES RECALLED HIM TO COSTA RICA DURING THE 1955 NICARAGUAN INVASION.

WHILE AT MCGILL, ODUBER MET AND COURTED MARJORIE ELLIOT, DAUGHTER OF A CANADIAN DIPLOMAT. THEY WERE MARRIED IN PARIS IN 1950 AND HAVE ONE ADOPTED TEENAGED SON, ADRIAN, AND A RECENTLY ADOPTED INFANT GIRL. ODUBER

IS FLUENT IN BOTH ENGLISH AND FRENCH.

PRESIDENT ODUBER HAS A CASUAL, INFORMAL STYLE--HE RARELY WEARS A TIE. IN MEETINGS WITH FOREIGNERS, HE TENDS TO TALK MORE THAN LISTEN. HE ENJOYS IMPRESSING AMERICANS WITH HIS COMMAND OF ENGLISH, HIS BROAD GRASP OF HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS, AND HIS VIEWS ON THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA THE CARIBBEAN, HOW HE HAS EXERTED A MODERATING INFLUENCE ON TORRIJOS (AND, THEREFORE, HAS BEEN HELPFUL TO THE U.S.), AND HOW WELL COSTA RICA HAS FARED DURING HIS ADMINISTRATION.

ODUBER IS WELL DISPOSED TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES. HE HAS VISITED THE U.S. OFTEN, AND IS QUITE KNOWLEDGE-ABLE ABOUT U.S. GOVERNMENT, POLITICS, AND POLITICAL FIGURES. LIKE EX-PRESIDENT FIGUERES, HE HAS HAD WIDE CONTACTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, AND REGARDS SENATOR HUMPHREY AS A CLOSE FRIEND. HE VIEWS BILATERAL RELATIONS AS VERY GOOD, BUT POINTS TO TRADE ISSUES AS AREAS IN WHICH THE U.S. COULD BE MOST HELPFUL TO COSTA RICA AND LATIN AMERICA. IN THIS REGARD, HE HAS ARGUED THAT THE U.S. ADOPT A PREFERENTIAL TRADE SYSTEM FOR LATIN AMERICA.

PRESIDENT ODUBER'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IS EUROPEAN STYLE SOCIAL DEMOCRACY (OF THE GERMAN AND SWEDISH BRAND). HE WAS RECENTLY ELECTED ONE OF FOURTEEN VICE-PRESIDENTS OF THE WORLD SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION--THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL.
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REGARDING HIS OWN GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE, ODUBER IS MOST PLEASED WITH HIS FAMILY ALLOWANCES PROGRAM, WHICH IS ESPECIALLY FOCUSED ON THE RURAL POOR, AND WHICH INCLUDES SUCH FEATURES AS SCHOOL LUNCHEES, PREVENTIVE MEDICINE, AND DAY CARE CENTERS.

PRESIDENT ODUBER IS AN AVOWED ENVIRONMENTALIST. IN WASHINGTON THIS PAST FEBRUARY, HE WAS AWARDED THE U.S. ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE'S ALBERT SCHWEITZER MEDAL FOR HIS EFFORTS IN CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION. DURING THE CEREMONY AT THE CAPITAL, PRESIDENT CARTER CALLED TO EXPRESS HIS CONGRATULATIONS.

ODUBER THINKS HIGHLY OF PRESIDENT CARTER AND IS PLEASED WITH THE ADMINISTRATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. HE FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT ONE WAY FOR THE U.S. TO IMPLEMENT ITS HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY IS SPECIAL, FAVORABLE TREATMENT FOR COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE GOOD HUMAN RIGHTS

RECORDS--LIKE COSTA RICA. PARTICULARLY GRATIFYING TO ODUBER WAS THE SUPPORT EXPRESSED BY PRESIDENT CARTER IN HIS MARCH 17 UN ADDRESS FOR THE 1965 COSTA RICAN PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A UN COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS--ESPECIALLY SINCE PRESIDENT ODUBER HAD COINCIDENTALLY MENTIONED THAT SAME COSTA RICAN PROPOSAL THE NIGHT BEFORE IN A STATE DINNER IN HONOR OF THE PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA. HE JOKES IN PRIVATE (ODUBER'S SENSE OF HUMOR IS A WRY ONE AND GENERALLY POLITICALLY ORIENTED) THAT HE DOES NOT DISPEL THE VIEW OF THOSE WHO THINK THAT HE AND PRESIDENT CARTER CAREFULLY COORDINATED THIS HUMAN RIGHTS THRUST. PRESIDENT ODUBER'S PLAN TO ADDRESS THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIS FALL IN LARGE PART IS LINKED TO THIS EFFORT. HE AND FOREIGN MINISTER FACIO EXPECT THAT THE U.S. WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH COSTA RICA ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE UN.

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DANIEL ODUBER JUST ENTERED THE FINAL YEAR OF HIS FOUR-YEAR TERM. AS COSTA RICA PRESIDENTS CANNOT BE RE-ELECTED, HE IS FACED WITH SLOWLY DIMINISHING POLITICAL POWER, WHICH HAS BEEN EXACERBATED BY WIDELY HEARD CHARGES THAT HE HAS ENRICHED HIMSELF IN THE PRESIDENCY. COMPLICATING SUCH CORRUPTION IN THE PRESIDENCY. COMPLICATING SUCH CORRUPTION CHARGES IS RIVALRY BETWEEN ODUBER AND JOSE FIGUERES, AND FIGUERES' PUBLIC ASSERTION THAT THERE IS INDEED CORRUPTION IN THE ODUBER GOVERNMENT. CURRENTLY, ODUBER IS WAGING AN UPHILL POLITICAL BATTLE TO DEFLECT THE CORRUPTION ISSUE, AND TO FOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION ON THE VERY MANY POSITIVE ASPECTS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION.

NOTE BY OC/T: DISSIMINATION COORDINATED WITH S/S-O, MACFARLAND.

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3. MARJORIE ELLIOT DE ODUBER, THE CANADIAN WIFE OF THE COSTA RICAN PRESIDENT, IS DESCRIBED BY THOSE WHO KNOW HER BEST AS WARM, SIMPLE, FRIENDLY, A TRIFLE SHY, AND VERY RELAXED. SHE AVOIDS PUBLICITY, AND INDEED HAS THE REPUTATION OF PREFERRING TO AVOID THE PUBLIC EYE WHZ EVER SHE CAN. ALTHOUGH SHE IS NOT THE POLITICAL ANIMAL THAT HER HUSBAND IS, AND SHE AVOIDS THE OFFICIAL PRESIDENTIAL VISITS AND POLITICAL TYPE ACTIVITIES, MRS. ODUBER ENJOYS A GREAT DEAL OF LOW KEY PUBLIC EXPOSURE THROUGH HER WORK IN RURAL LIBRARY PROMOTION AND COOPERATIVES. MRS. ODUBER IS BILINGUAL IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH.

MRS. ODUBER'S MAJOR INTEREST DURING THE THREE YEARS SHE HAS BEEN FIRST LADY HAS BEEN IN BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING THE COUNTRY'S RURAL SCHOOL LIBRARIES. INE THIS ENDEAVOR SHE TRAVELS ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK INTO THE COSTA RICAN COUNTRYSIDE TO VISIT THREE OR FOUR RURAL SCHOOLS, AND TO BRING PACKETS OF BOOKS, BASIC COLLECTIONS, SCHOOL FURNITURE, OR WHATEVER SHE CAN TO THE SCHOOL AND THE SCHOOL CHILDREN. AS IS COSTA RICAN STYLE, PROGRAMS OF SONGS AND NATIVE DANCES ARE PRESENTED, AND MRS. ODUBER, WHO CONSIDERS HERSELF CHILDREN-ORIENTED, SCOAILIZES WITH THE YOUNGSTERS. MRS. ODUBER BRINGS ALONG ON THESE VISITS THE WIVES IN THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY AS WELL AS GROUPS OF FRIENDS OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN HELPING THE PROGRAM.

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THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT IS ANOTHER INTEREST OF MRS. ODUBER'S INTERESTS. DURING HER HUSBAND'S EARLIER POLITICAL YEARS, SHE WAS A PROMOTER OF RURAL CONSUMERS

AND PRODUCERS COOPERATIVES. IN HER LIBRARY PROMOTION VISITS, MRS. ODUBER NEVER FAILS TO MENTION THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT AND THE BENEFITS FOR ALL MEMBERS OF A COMMUNITY THAT SUCH MEMBERSHIP CAN BRING.

ALTHOUGH SHE DOES NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVE HERSELF IN HER HUSBAND'S POLITICAL AND OFFICIAL UDITIES, MRS. ODUBER CARRIES THE MESSAGE OF THE ODUBER ADMINISTRATION WITH HER IN HER VISITS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE. SHE IS ESPE-
CIALLY PROUD OF THE AMOUNT OF TRAVELLING THAT THE PRESIDENT DOES WITHIN COSTA RICA, NOTING THAT HE IS

THE MOST TRAVELLED PRESIDENT IN THE COUNTRY'S HISTORY.

BORN IN CANADA, THE DAUGHTER OF A CAREER DIPLOMAT AND FORMER CANADIAN AMBASSADOR TO CHILE, MRS. ODUBER MET HER HUSBAND WHILE BOTH WERE STUDYING AT MCGILL UNIVERSITY IN MONTREAL. MARRIED IN 1950 THEY HAVE TWO CHILDREN; AN ADOPTED TEENAGED SON, ADRIAN, AND A RECENTLY ADOPTED INFANT DAUGHTER. MRS ODUBER FREQUENTLY TRAVELS TO CANADA TO VISIT HER MOTHER, WHO HAS HAD A LONG ILLNESS.

4. FOREIGN MINISTER GONZALO FACIO, 59, HAS BEEN FOREIGN MINISTER OF COSTA RICA SINCE 1970. CHARMING, INTELLIGENT, WELL VERSED, ARTICULATE, WELL TRAVELLED, FACIO IS THE CONSUMMATE DIPLOMAT. HE IS ALSO VAIN, AND A BIT FOPPISH.

PARTIALLY BECAUSE OF THE LENGTH OF TIME HE HAS SPENT IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BUT ALSO BECAUSE HE IS BOTH COMPETENT AND ACTIVE, FACIO IS PROBABLY THE MOST WELL KNOWN AND RESPECTED FOREIGN MINISTER IN THE HEMISPHERE. HE IS OFTEN DESCRIBED BY HIS COSTA RICAN AND FOREIGN PEERS
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AS BRILLIANT AND CLEVER--AND WITH ADMIRABLE POLITICAL INSTINCTS.

FACIO IS ALSO WELL KNOWN IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. HE HAS TRAVELLED WIDELY AS FOREIGN MINISTER, ATTENDED THE UNGA AND OASGA MEETINGS REGULARLY, AND HE HAS ALSO SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL. HE IS SAID TO BE A CANDIDATE--AS YET UNDECLARED--FOR PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIS YEAR.

LIKE PRESIDENT ODUBER, FACIO TENDS TO DOMINATE A CONVERSATION AND TO IMPRESS HIS LISTENERS, ESPECIALLY AMERICANS, WITH HIS COMMAND OF THE LANGUAGE, HIS GRASP OF WORLD AS WELL AS HEMISPHERIC ISSUES (FACIO IS ESPECIALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE ON THE MIDDLE EAST, WHERE HE HAS TRAVELLED RECENTLY, SPAIN, WHOSE POLITICS AND PERSONALITIES HE KNOWS WELL, AND US-SOVIET RELATIONS), AND THE NUMBER OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL LEADERS WITH WHOM HE IS FRIENDLY. FACIO IS ESPECIALLY PROUD OF THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN DECORATIONS HE HAS RECEIVED IN HIS LONG DIPLOMATIC CAREER.

FACIO SERVED AS COSTA RICAN AMBASSADOR TO THE US FROM 1956-1958 AND AGAIN FROM 1962-1966. HE IS POSSIBLY THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE AND INFORMED LATIN AMERICAN OFFICIAL ON THE US POLITICAL SYSTEM, US HISTORY AND THE MORES OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. IN

WHAT HAS BECOME A TRADITION, EACH FOURTH OF JULY FACIO DELIVERS A LECTURE TO THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY ON SOME ASPECT OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL PROCESS. AT LAST YEAR'S BICENTENNIAL EVENT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SPOKE ABOUT THE HISTORY AND FUNCTIONING OF THE US JUDICIAL SYSTEM. HIS ADDRESS, DELIVERED IN FLUENT ENGLISH, CONVEYED A GRASP OF THE AMERICAN SYSTEM EQUALLED BY FEW AMERICANS.

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FACIO IS ALSO PROUD OF THE LEAD-TAKING ROLE THAT COSTA RICA HAS TAKEN, UNDER HIS PERSONAL DIRECTION, IN ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES MEETINGS. HE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE 1975 OAS MEETING AT SAN JOSE, AT WHICH THE 1947 RIO TREATY OF RECIPROCAL DEFENSE WAS REFORMED AND SANCTIONS AGAINST CUBA WERE LIFTED. FACIO ATTENDED THE 1974 OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATLANTA, WHERE HE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET MRS. CARTER AND THE PRESIDENT.

NOTE BY OCT: DISSINATION COORDINATED WITH SS/O PER MACFARLAND.

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FACIO IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A COSTA RICAN NATIONALIST, DEDICATED TO ADVANCING HIS NATION'S INTERESTS AND MAINTAINING AN INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY. AT THE SAME TIME HE HAS A REALISTIC PERCEPTION OF COSTA RICA'S DEPENDENCE ON US MARKETS AND COSTA RICA'S RELIANCE ON THE US (UNDER THE RIO TREATY) FOR DEFENSE AGAINST EXTERNAL AGGRESSION. FACIO HAS ADVOCATED FOR YEARS

THAT THE US SHOULD ESTABLISH A SYSTEM OF SPECIALIZED TRADE PREFERENCES FOR LATIN AMERICA, A PLAN HE HAS BEEN PROPOSING MOST RECENTLY WITH COLOMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO.

FACIO IS THE ARCHITECT AND CHIEF PROPONENT OF THE IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FOR COSTA RICA, WHICH HAS RELATIONS WITH A WIDE SPECTRUM OF NATIONS SUCH AS BOTH KOREAS, BOTH GERMANIES, VIETNAM AND SOUTH AFRICA. COSTA RICA'S STRONGEST TIES ARE WITH CENTRAL AMERICA, THE US, THE NORTHERN TIER OF SOUTH AMERICA, WESTERN EUROPE, JAPAN AND THE CARIBBEAN. COSTA RICAN RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ARE RECENT, AND SO FAR, OF LITTLE REAL IMPORTANCE TO COSTA RICA.

A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION PARTY, FACIO IS A POLITICAL MODERATE. HE WAS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED POLITICALLY WITH JOSE FIGUERES UNTIL THE RECENT PROBLEMS INVOLVING PAST ELECTION CONTRIBUTION

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SCANDALS, BUT THEY REMAIN FRIENDS. HIS ABORTED ATTEMPT TO WIN HIS PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION FOR THE FORTHCOMING 1978 ELECTIONS WAS VIGOROUSLY SUPPORTED BY FIGUERES.

FACIO IS MARRIED TO THE FORMER ANA FRANCO, A NATIVE OF GUATEMALA. THEY HAVE THREE CHILDREN. FACIO HAS TWO OTHER CHILDREN BY A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE. HE IS A GRANDFATHER.

5. ANA FRANCO DE FACIO IS A VIVACIOUS, OUTGOING AND ATTRACTIVE WOMAN IN HER LATE FORTIES. SHE VIGOROUSLY PARTICIPATED IN HER HUSBAND'S ABORTIVE CAMPAIGN FOR THE PLN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION LAST WINTER. IT WAS EVIDENT SHE PARTICULARLY RELISHED THE POLITICAL RALLIES AND PUBLIC APPEARANCES SHE MADE DURING THAT PERIOD.

THE FORMER ANA FRANCO CALZIA MARRIED GONZALO FACIO IN 1953. PRIOR TO HER MARRIAGE, THE GUATEMALAN-BORN MRS. FRACIO LIVED FOR A TIME IN NEW ORLEANS WHERE SHE STUDIED ACCOUNTING, ART, MUSIC AND INTERIOR DECORATING AND WORKED AS A BILINGUAL SECRETARY. SHE ALSO LIVED IN THE U.S. FOR SIX YEARS WHILE HER HUSBAND WAS COSTA RICAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON. SHE IS FLUENT IN ENGLISH AND WELL DISPOSED TOWARDS THE U.S. THE FACIOS HAVE TWO GROWN DAUGHTERS AND A TEENAGED SON.

6. FRANCISCO SAENZ MEZA, PRESIDENT OF SUPREME ELECTORAL

TRIBUNAL (TRIBUNAL SUPREMO DE ELECCIONES), 55, HAS SERVED ON THE SUPREME ELECTION TRIBUNAL, COSTA RICA'S UNIQUE FOURTH BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT, FOR 18 YEARS, AND WAS JUST SELECTED BY THE COSTA RICAN SUPREME COURT FOR A NEW SIX-YEAR TERM. HE WAS ALSO RECENTLY ELECTED TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE THREE-MAN TRIBUNAL, WHICH EXPANDS TO FIVE FOR AN 18-MONTH PERIOD AT ELECTION TIME, FOR THE THIRD TIME IN HIS CAREER. THE TRIBUNAL IS AN INDEPENDENT BODY THAT CALLS, CONFIDENTIAL

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SUPERVISES, GUARANTEES THE FREEDOM OF, AND CERTIFIES THE RESULTS OF COSTA RICAN ELECTIONS.

A LIKABLE LAWYER, AND, BY NATURE OF HIS JOB, APOLITICAL, SAENZ WAS A LAWYER AND JUDGE BEFORE JOINING THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL. HE IS AN UNABASHED ADMIRER AND FRIEND OF THE U.S. HE FOLLOWS THE U.S. POLITICAL PROCESS CLOSELY, IS WELL VERSED ON OUR ELECTORAL SYSTEM, AND IS INTRIGUED BY HOW JIMMY CARTER MOVED METHODICALLY THROUGH THE PRIMARY ELECTION PROCESS TO GAIN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY NOMINATION AND THE PRESIDENCY.

IN 1972 SAENZ VISITED THE U.S. UNDER A STATE DEPARTMENT GRANT. AT THE TIME HE OBSERVED FIRSTHAND THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. HE WAS IN WASHINGTON ON ELECTION DAY, AND HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH AND DISCUSS THE ELECTION PROCESS WITH A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND POLITICAL PERSONALITIES.

SAENZ IS AFFECTIONALLY KNOWN HERE AS "DON CHICO" (CHICO IS THE COSTA RICAN NICKNAME FOR "FRANCISCO"). HIS WIFE, KATE, PROUDLY RETAINS HER U.S. CITIZENSHIP EVEN THOUGH SHE HAS LIVED MOST OF HER LIFE IN COSTA RICA. THE SAENZ HAVE SEVEN GROWN CHILDREN, AND GRANDCHILDREN. KILDAY

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